

VZCZCXRO3973
PP RUEHDBU RUEHPW RUEHSL
DE RUEHAK #0246/01 0470539
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 160539Z FEB 10
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2123
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 00246

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT ALSO FOR EUR/SE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/29/2020
TAGS: [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [AF](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: D/SRAP JONES BILATERALS AT ISTANBUL REGIONAL
SUMMIT ON AFGHANISTAN

REF: ANKARA 72

Classified By: POL Counselor Daniel O'Grady, for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan (SRAP) Paul Jones met with senior representatives from China, Russia, Turkey, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and the Organization of Islamic States (OIC) on the edges of the January 26 Afghanistan neighbors conference in Istanbul. He provided an overview of ongoing U.S. efforts in Afghanistan and solicited interlocutors' views on issues including: enhanced coordination of Afghanistan assistance; regional challenges to Afghan stability (such as extremism and the narcotics trade); potential frameworks for regional cooperation; the roles of various countries, including India and Iran, in stabilizing Afghanistan; and prospects for Afghan-led efforts to reintegrate low-level Taliban members. All bilats underscored growing interest among Afghanistan's neighbors to contribute to regional stability, in coordination with U.S. policy.

12. (C) SUMMARY (Cont.): While emphasizing that Russia's primary concerns in Afghanistan are preventing al-Qaeda's return and reducing the regional drug trade, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Bordavkin indicated that Russia and other SCO members would support promoting Afghanistan's neutrality among its neighbors. Chinese SRAP Sun Weidong underscored Chinese Qort for additional civilian assistance to Afghanistan and discussed the challenges of working with Pakistan. Foreign ministers from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan proposed hosting conferences to further regional cooperation on Afghanistan and reiterated their strong support for U.S. efforts in Afghanistan. Turkey's SRAP, Ambassador Engin Soysal, discussed frameworks for regional cooperation. Defending exclusion of India from the conference, he explained that Turkey believed different groupings of regional countries were needed to address different issues. Managing the views of Iran, India, and Pakistan would require a flexible diplomatic approach and Turkey will include India in future forums, such as the Regional Economic Conference (RECCA), which Turkey will host in 2010. END SUMMARY.

RUSSIA

13. (C) Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Borodavkin expressed concerns about rumored negotiations between ISAF and senior Afghan Taliban leaders. He emphasized that Pakistan's negotiations with the Taliban had ended in failure and had grave consequences for Pakistan's security. Borodavkin also said that while Russia wished the United States success with its military operations in Afghanistan, it was concerned that ISAF was too focused on Afghanistan's East and South, allowing the Taliban to encroach on previously stable areas in the North. Deputy SRAP Jones replied that he would share Qodavkin's concerns with ISAF Commander General McChrystal and noted that the U.S. troop surge would help reverse

Taliban momentum. Jones said that the United States and ISAF were focused on supporting Afghan-led reintegration of fighters and low-level commanders, not negotiations with Taliban leadership. Borodavkin highlighted Russia's concerns about drug trafficking as "the most pressing concern" for Russia. Jones explained our desire to expand counter-drug cooperation. Towards that end, Jones noted that U.S. Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) Director Gil Kerlikowske would soon travel to Afghanistan and Moscow with an interagency team to discuss ways to expand cooperation against drug traffickers. Jones said the U.S. was open to adding names of drug traffickers associated with the Taliban and al-Qaeda to the UN 1267 list, in addition to well-founded de-listings. He noted the 1267 committee's January 25 decision to de-list five individuals formerly associated with the Taliban, which had previously been blocked by Russia. Keeping the 1267 list alive required additions and de-listings. Borodavkin said that he "100 percent agreed" with this approach. Russia was willing to consider UN 1267 de-listings if requests were well-founded. He encouraged the United States to share names and information.

¶4. (C) Changing from security issues, Qodavkin provided a read-out of the SCO Deputy Foreign Ministers' meeting held in Moscow on January 20. While the "Iranians were Iranian," Borodavkin said all of the SCO members expressed a desire to support Afghanistan. Recalling his November 2009 discussions in Moscow with Special Representative Holbrooke, Borodavkin said that he had floated the U.S. idea about a framework for reaffirming Afghanistan's neutral status. All of the Central Asian republics, as well as China, Russia, and Iran were supportive. Afghan President Karzai's team was also enthusiastic, though the Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister expressed reservations that if Afghanistan said it was "neutral," countries would cease to provide vital assistance. Borodavkin suggested that if the United States continued its cautious diplomacy on this issue, an agreement would be reached. The key: avoiding any impression that we are forcing this on the Afghans. Jones expressed appreciation for the read-out and said that support from other countries on Afghan's neutrality was a good first step.

¶5. (C) Borodavkin said Russia supports the SCO as the best forum for regional issues, since all regional players are members or observers (note: but not the U.S.). He noted several other proposed regional mechanisms: Uzbekistan's "6 3," the "Bishkek Initiative," and Kazakhstan's proposal to host a conference focused on humanitarian issues in Afghanistan. Jones replied that we should avoid creating rigid regional frameworks and noted India's exclusion from the Istanbul conference. Borodavkin volunteered that India was "very upset" about being excluded. He added that the SCO was the best forum for India; though it was an observer, Russia did not differentiate between observers and members. Concluding the meeting, Borodavkin welcomed continued coordination with the United States on Afghanistan.

TURKEY

¶6. (C) Turkish SRAP Ambassador Engin Soysal welcomed U.S. participation in the Istanbul conference and said that regional cooperation needed to be initiated by neighbors and not imposed from the outside. Turkey was "fully transparent" with India about its participation in the Istanbul meeting, felt inviting India would have complicated summit dynamics, and understood Pakistan's desire to exclude India since the genesis for the Istanbul conference came from a trilateral meeting that Turkey, Afghanistan, and Pakistan had in 2009. While arguing that India was "not ready to attend a meeting with all of the observers," Soysal said India would participate along with Afghanistan and Pakistan at the Turkish-hosted Regional Economic Conference (RECCA) that Turkey would host later in 2010. Focusing more broadly on Turkey's diplomatic efforts to support Afghanistan, Soysal said that Turkey wanted to help Pakistan build its confidence by creating "a safe context" for initial engagement with

Afghanistan's neighbors. Asked to comment on Iranian views towards regional cooperation on Afghanistan, Soysal said that Iran was "obsessed with structures." Soysal believed the Obama administration presented a new opportunity to engage all of Afghanistan's neighbors in focused areas. He said that Iranian Vice President Rahimi had listened closely to Jones' remarks during the plenary, taking careful notes, and that a calibrated approach in regional fora could pay potential dividends. Briefly noting ongoing discussions on Turkey providing additional assistance to Pakistan, Soysal said he expected the new Islamabad office of Turkey's international aid agency (TIKA) to be up and running within a month.

CHINA

17. (C) Chinese SRAP and Deputy Director General for Asian Affairs Sun Weidong expressed appreciation for the positive cooperation with the United States on Afghanistan over the past few months, as well as the bilateral discussions in November 2009 headed by Deputy SRAP Dan Feldman. Sun said the MFA had forwarded recently received U.S. proposals for joint projects (Ref B) to Chinese Foreign Minister Yang who was studying them. Echoing Yang's earlier statement to the conference, Sun said that Afghanistan's neighbors should play a positive role in civilian efforts and highlighted the importance of non-interference in Afghanistan's domestic affairs. Sun advocated a series of dialogues on how to help Afghanistan's neighbors and said that each neighbor's concerns would need to be addressed if Afghanistan was to be stabilized. Jones and Sun discussed the recently released U.S. Afghanistan and Pakistan Regional Stabilization Strategy, with Jones emphasizing that the United States has no plans for long-term military bases in the region. Turning to Pakistan, Sun said that the international community must provide more support. Acknowledging that even China found the Pakistani government a difficult partner to work with, Sun opined that Pakistanis had such a dignity. They want to do it themselves.8 He advised a respectful approach and said that the fact that Pakistan's anti-terror strategies came from Pakistan itself and were supported by the Pakistani people would help our efforts in the long-run. Sun closed by volunteering that China also would like to see decreased tension and increased cooperation between Pakistan and rival India.

KYRGYZSTAN

18. (C) Kyrgyz State Minister of Foreign Affairs Kadyrbek Sarbaev noted Kyrgyzstan maintains its Transit Center at Manas despite protests from other regional countries because Kyrgyzstan believes the United States must win the war in Afghanistan. He mentioned several times his concerns about what might happen if the United States pulls its forces out of Afghanistan in 2011. Jones explained we do not plan a precipitous pullout but rather a responsible transition to a greater Afghan lead. It is based on the conditions on the ground. Sarbaev spoke at length about the "Bishkek initiative," sharing a white paper that outlined a series of three conferences on narrow topics agreed upon by the regional players, including Russia and China. He said these conferences would complement other regional efforts. Separately, Sarbaev said that in five years Kyrgyzstan will have enough electricity for export to Afghanistan, and can also offer more training to Afghans. On reintegration, he said that while the time was not right for negotiations with senior-level Taliban commanders, Kyrgyzstan knows which Taliban commanders are willing to be reintegrated and with whom they are willing to talk, "as well as the people by whom they could be influenced." Sarbaev said that Kyrgyzstan was willing to share this information and to offer its territory and influence to start a reintegration process. Deputy SRAP Jones thanked the FM for the offer and suggested he discuss it with the Afghan government.

ORGANIZATION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE (OIC)

¶9. (C) OIC Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu confirmed that not all OIC member states had Ambassador-level representation in Afghanistan and that President Karzai has shared his concerns about this. He explained that most OIC countries are represented at some level, and there is growing interest in further representation, but the current security situation holds full representation back. Ihsanoglu expressed his opinion that that time was right for the Afghan government and the international community to engage with the Taliban, explaining his belief that there is a "big difference" between the Taliban and al-Qaeda. While al-Qaeda was a "professional terrorism group," the Taliban were "the sons of Afghanistan." Ihsanoglu said that he personally did not like the Taliban, but their political power and ethnic influence were a reality that must be recognized. He offered that the OIC had experience in moderating the views of Muslim groups and leaders through dialogue and contended that the OIC was the only organization that all sides would feel comfortable engaging with. He said the OIC could provide a framework not available anywhere else that would give all parties to the conflict a sense of ownership in its resolution.

TAJIKISTAN

¶10. (C) Tajikistan's Foreign Minister Hamrohon Zarifi emphasized the need for transport and energy routes avoid the proQatic Uzbekistan. Zarifi referred to the SCO as a positive and practical forum for Afghanistan and Pakistan issues, and noted that China had used the SCO to discuss potential investment projects. He expressed interest in Tajikistan providing an alternative to Manas as an air hub for humanitarian flights to supply ISAF. He also said Tajikistan's was interested in holding the next major international conference on Afghanistan in Dushanbe. Commenting on Afghanistan's complex ethnic politics, he suggested that Afghanistan would benefit from the creation of a prime ministerial post in addition to the current presidential post, as this would allow different ethnic groups to be represented at the central government's top levels. Tajikistan's model of a president and prime minister from different regions worked well.

¶11. (U) Deputy SRAP Paul Jones has cleared this cable.

Jeffrey

"Visit Ankara's Classified Web Site at <http://www.intelink.s.gov.gov/wiki/Portal:Turkey>"